INTRODUCING A STRUCTURED FORMAT FOR LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT: THE TUTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Clare Jacobs [Clare.jacobs@anglia.ac.uk], Yvette Winnard [Yvette.winnard@anglia.ac.uk], Vicki Elliott [Vicki.elliott@anglia.ac.uk], Faculty of Medical Science, Department of Allied and Public Health, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper describes our experience of introducing a structured format for students requesting formative feedback on draft work. Initially the aims were to encourage the development of self-assessment skills in distance-learning students and to develop the dialogue between student and tutor. In 2013 we considered the benefits of this initiative could be applied to campus based students with a similar profile. The experiences of staff involved in this process were collated and the advantages and challenges recorded.

Our experience confirms this process results in high quality, specific and consistent feedback which can impact on students' success in summative assessment. The development of trust in the process results in useful dialogue and increased self-esteem as students gain confidence in their critical-thinking skills. An unexpected benefit shows students utilise the process to express anxieties about, not only their studies, but personal and work challenges, thereby enabling us to provide additional support.

The most challenging aspect for tutors is the time required to provide feedback in this format. This process highlights distinct benefits for students and in our view these outweigh the issue of tutor time, but resources need to be addressed before it can be used effectively for larger cohorts.

Keywords: Self-assessment; Formative feedback; Dialogue; Student support; Distance learning; Interaction.

Introduction

The link between self-assessment; enhanced learning and lifelong learning has been well made (Boud, 2000), thus course teams have a responsibility to facilitate students' development of self-assessment skills. Self-assessment and formative assessment promote student learning and increasingly autonomous practice (Gosling & Moon, 2002) and self-assessment also contributes to the development of critical thinking skills, an essential element expected of graduates. Assessing performance against specific criteria is judged to be particularly helpful in developing these skills (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006).

This paper considers a project in which self-assessment was carried out on students' draft work as part of a formative process, leading to revisions and improvements of work before it was submitted as a summative assessment. This staged analysis of assignments is reported to improve weaker students' performance (Cooper, 2000) and extended our existing practice of reviewing student draft work. Unlike self-evaluation which involves determining a grade (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009), students assessed their work against criteria and tutors provided feedback on their analysis. This paper looks at tutors' experiences of this initiative. Tutors' aims were to increase the dialogue between students and tutors and also to encourage students' development of critical self-assessment skills. This was accomplished using a structured draft work assessment form which students completed and emailed to their tutor with a draft of their assignment.

Having reviewed the draft work, the tutor responded to students' comments on the draft work assessment form.

The relationship between tutor and student has been shown to impact on learning and course outcomes (Panagiotis & Chrysoula, 2010). The development of any relationship involves commitment from both parties; requiring elements of trust and respect and excellent communication. The aspect of trust may be particularly important within the self-assessment process as it involves open and honest reflection. Understanding the student profile is an important factor in developing confidence and also in providing relevant and appropriate student support. The students involved in this project were predominantly mature students who face the challenges of efficient time-management in balancing employment and family commitments with effective study time (Watts & Waraker, 2008). Typically, our students have reported a reluctance to seek support for a number of reasons including fear of criticism, embarrassment at not knowing the answer and lack of confidence (Zembylas, Theodorou and Pavlakis, 2008).

Within this project all students (whether on campus or distance-learners) communicated by email with their tutors when discussing their draft work. The asynchronous nature of this communication can be challenging, with the potential for misconstruing e-mails and the fact that it takes longer to build relationships online. Salmon (2006) suggests self-awareness and interpersonal sensitivity are key skills for those supporting students online and competent online communication skills are a necessity for tutors. Nevertheless, it can also facilitate in-depth communication, as students determine their own pace with time to reflect (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006).

What we did

The draft work assessment form was initially created for work-based distance-learning students in 2007. Students had always been encouraged to send a draft of their submissions when they considered that feedback would be helpful and the form was designed to enhance this process. This was an effective time to engage in the formative feedback process, whilst the student is motivated by the potential to improve their final submission and before they have invested too much in their assignment for them to consider making changes (McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007).

We did have concerns that putting any kind of additional step into the draft work process would deter students from submitting a draft. Drafts are not compulsory and whilst we considered this to be a beneficial process, our intention was to avoid making it more labour intensive. However, we needed to engage the students by providing prompt, meaningful feedback and we felt that using a self-assessment tool at this stage would be an effective interaction. After some initial reluctance, students used the form successfully within a small number of work-based distance-learning courses and informal feedback from both tutors and students was positive.

In 2013 we deemed that this process would benefit work-based students who attended University one day a week. These students had many similarities to the distance-learning students and were already submitting drafts by email for tutors to comment on, so it seemed a natural extension to existing practice. At this point we felt it would be beneficial to consider the experience of the teaching staff to inform practice and further development. Our experience as online distance-learning tutors was that the students gained valuable skills from self-assessing their work but that the process was labour intensive for staff. Including a new group of staff meant we could assess their experience of the process and see whether they agreed that the advantages for students were demonstrable. All staff involved in the draft work process for a first year module was asked to use the draft work assessment form when giving students formative feedback and their experiences were collated by the authors.

We selected a module which is delivered across three courses (see Table 1): one being delivered entirely by online distance learning, the other two delivered on campus. The module is assessed by a patchwork text assignment (5000 words), comprising four patches. Students were allowed to submit one draft of each patch for formative feedback; thus ensuring they received timely feedback to enable them to edit and enhance their work prior to summative submission (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004-5). Students were given 'soft' deadlines for draft work at stages during the semester; the aim of this being to facilitate students' time management and to distribute tutors' workload across the semester. We also imposed a final deadline two weeks' before the summative assessment submission date; thus allowing staff time to provide feedback and students time to edit their work prior to submission.

Table 1: Courses included in the draft work assessment process

	Mode of delivery	**Work-based students**	**UK/International students**
FdSc Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care	Online distance learning	Yes	UK
FdSc Health and Social Care	Campus based	Yes	UK
FdSc Public Health	Campus based	No	UK and International

The design of the draft work assessment form

Back in 2007 our aim was to design a student friendly form which would enable tutors to provide consistent formative feedback. To aid this process, the teaching team reviewed their practice to determine how the draft work process was undertaken. At the time it appeared that the students were not engaged with the process, and would email their drafts to the tutor, often with little or no evaluative comment. Our impression was that students were disempowered. Feedback was provided in various ways; some tutors used track changes on the students' work whilst others wrote a short summary paragraph. The use of track changes sometimes meant that tutors became involved in changing spelling and grammar, as well as commenting on the structure and content. The effectiveness of giving feedback in this way was uncertain, as a high volume of feedback can appear overwhelming to the student and consequently can be counterproductive (Shute, 2008).

We were also concerned that, due to the modular delivery of our course, students may not have received feedback on their summative assignment for one module before they begin the next. We knew that the self-assessment of draft work would be responded to quickly. However the issue remained that if summative feedback is specific to module content, it was unlikely that students would be able to transfer the learning from their summative feedback from module to module (Weaver, 2006). This lack of continuity in learning was a consideration in the design of the draft work form.

An important consideration in developing the form was supporting the students to understand the importance of using the module learning outcomes as criteria against which to assess their own work. We wanted the students to feel empowered to assess their own development and hoped that by including the student within the assessment process, they would set their own goals which would impact on their motivation (Shute, 2008). Students had always been explicitly directed to the learning outcomes for each module and marking schemes for assessments. However all the evidence was that the students were not evaluating their own work against these criteria; they were seeing this as the role of the tutor. Gibbs and Simpson (2004-5) suggest 'special steps' to encourage students to engage with feedback which include asking students what

areas of their work they would like feedback on and getting students to consider whether their own evaluation of their work and their tutors evaluation of their work correspond.

The core structure of the form consisted of the same four sections within a table. Two of these sections, content and considering the module learning outcomes, were module specific. The other two sections, presentation and structure and the overall comments section, were related to academic skills that continue to build across the programme (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton, 2002). Initially the forms were standard across learning levels; however, as we developed the process we realised that it would encourage the students to consider the assessment in more depth, if they were to address questions that were module specific.

Weaver (2006) identifies several factors which negatively affect the quality of feedback offered. Feedback that is perceived by students to be too general or vague is unhelpful. This form of self-assessment invites the student to be part of the process; they have an active role.

By identifying an area of their work as weak then the tutor is specifically directed towards it.

This ability to pinpoint areas of concern makes it easier for tutors to suggest specific ways in which work could be enhanced. This also addresses another of Weaver's points that feedback which lacks guidance on how to improve is unhelpful.

The students were provided with an exemplar of a completed level 4 draft work assessment form (Figure 1). For each section the student is asked to evaluate their work against specific criteria. The tutor also has a box in which they respond to the student's evaluation and include any additional suggestions they may have.

Name: Elizabeth Bennett (fictional student)	SID: 123456	Date: Oct 2014

Guidance: This form contains 4 sections which reflect the marking criteria applied to this part of your submission. Read the criteria for each section carefully; assess your work against the criteria and make detailed and specific comments about your achievements and areas for development. This exercise should not be seen as an onerous task but a real opportunity to develop your skills in reviewing your own performance. Try to maintain a balance. There is often a tendency to be over critical of yourself. Be honest but if you think that you have done well and can justify it then say so!

1. **Content**
In Patch 3 you must:
1. Choose a service – this could be a service in which you are currently employed, a service in which you hope to be employed in the future or another service of your choice. You are strongly advised to discuss your ideas with the Module Leader/Tutor.
2. Explain the service you have chosen and describe how it 'fits' within the public or private sector.
3. Outline the role of key personnel who are involved in delivering this service.
4. Identify and explain key national policies and guidelines relevant to the delivery of this service.
5. Explain the role of regulatory bodies in the quality of the service provided and the impact of non-conformity.
6. Describe how the current political agenda, available funding and changes in society impact on the service.
7. Describe the impact of new technology on the service provided.
8. Use references to support your work.

Student self-assessment *(Explain how you have addressed these criteria):*
I have chosen my work environment and I have defined my role. I have described lots of personnel although I don't know who I should choose as we work in a big team so this section might be a bit long. I have found some policies that relate to my role but they are all from my trust I don't know if this is right. I have talked about the role of the CQC and monitor. I'm not sure what factors affect my workplace but I have discussed the difficulties that we are having with funding. The technology side of things is quite basic but I have stuck to technology that I use within my job role like texting people a reminder for their appointments.

Tutor response:
- **You open your work with a description of your organization and how your workplace fits within that. There is a lot of information within this introduction Elizabeth and very little of it is referenced- please show where your information has come from.**
- **Your role is identified and you describe how you interact with other members of the multidisciplinary team. You are right in thinking that the section is too long and you need to cut out some of the detail- sometimes students include a flow chart at the end of their work in an appendix which they show all the people they interact with – you can then refer to this within your patch. Or you could choose to concentrate on a few key roles.**
- **You have chosen the local policies which relate to your area of work but you need to include a National policy or guideline perhaps look at the Equality Act as you have touched on equal opportunities within this section.**
- **The section on the care regulators is done well.**
- **Political and economic factors are covered appropriately. You need to consider the social factors which impact upon your service.**
- **You could include more detail in the technology section but the essence of what you have written is fine.**

2. Presentation
Have you provided an introduction and conclusion?
Is your work written in a logical manner/have you used headings?
Have you used references to support your work?
Do you consider your referencing to be accurate?

Student self-assessment *(Comment on each of these aspects of presentation and explain why you consider that you have achieved them):*
I think so I struggled to join everything together at the end. I have used headings to divide up the sections of my work as it helped me to plan what I was going to write in each section. The referencing is tricky and I have got a bit stuck with some of the trust policies- could you check that these are correct?

Tutor response:
You have identified that you conclusion needs work and I would agree - it is very short as a guide your conclusion should be 8-10% of the word count. It shouldn't contain any new information so you need to ensure the part about new developments in your role is placed in the body of your work where it would be more relevant. You need to draw your main points together in the conclusion and reflect on the question so you show the reader that you have answered all the main points.
The headings work well in this patch and help you to keep on track.
This patch contains all the information that you need Elizabeth but the presentation of that information needs work. There are some errors in tense and many very short sentences which at times interrupt the flow of your work. This is a shame as it you could improve the flow quite easily- just a little tweaking here and there.
You need to make sure that all your information is referenced especially facts and figures; in some areas this is done well in others it is a bit patchy, make sure it is consistent before submission. I can see that you have worked hard on your reference list and your trust policy references are correct.
Please include a word count at the end of each patch.

3. Learning Outcomes *On successful completion of this module the student will be expected to be able to:*
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the delivery of services both nationally and locally using a range of investigative skills and techniques.
2. Identify national policies and guidelines relevant to the chosen area of the service.
3. Understand the impact of political, economic, social and technological factors on the sector.
4. Describe the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders.
5. Identify, locate, summarise and utilise information relevant to learning development and the working environment.
6. Prepare an outline personal development plan identifying the transferrable and specific skills for future employment opportunities and career progression.

Student self-assessment *(Comment on whether your work demonstrates achievement of LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, and LO5):* I have considered my own service and the role that it plays in keeping people well. My policies are a bit limited I think this section needs work. I'm not sure that I have got the balance right between all the factors which affect my workplace. I have tried to show that I have used information to support the points that is have made.

Tutor response:
I would agree that your work meets the LOs but you need to consider National policies as well as local. I can see that you are working hard to support the points that you have made but some of these areas need referencing.

4. Overall Comments about Patch 3:
Use this section to present an overview of your work and take the opportunity to ask specific questions.

Student self-assessment summary
Main strengths: I think I have lots of information within this patch
Opportunities for development: Referencing and I know my conclusion doesn't really work but don't know how to change it?
Questions:
Comments: I have found it hard to find all the information I needed but I have learnt lots about my trust and how it is managed.

Tutor response summary:
Main strengths: You have done lots of research and included lots of information within your patch which is great to see.
Opportunities for development: Some sections of your work are referenced really well but others are not; please try to be consistent throughout. You need to work on your grammar throughout and make sure that you develop your conclusion (please see my comments above).
Answers:
Comments: There is evidence throughout this piece of lots of hard work- well done Elizabeth. If any of my comments are unclear then please get in touch.

Figure 1.

What we learned

Strategies to encourage students to self-assess effectively

Tutors found that some students initially failed to complete the form correctly or fully. This related predominantly, but not exclusively, to achievement of the module learning outcomes, particularly since each patch in the patchwork text assignment addresses different learning outcomes and the student was unclear which learning outcomes the work related to. As a consequence of this the relevant learning outcomes are now highlighted on the form.

Many of the questions or prompts are open-ended and invite the student to provide examples of how they have met a specific criterion. Some students embrace the opportunity to self-assess and ask questions resulting in very specific guidance and dialogue. However, other comments lacked depth, for instance "I hope the content is fine" and therefore, in these instances the specific responses tutors can offer are limited.

There may be a number of reasons for this range of responses. Students are given a deadline for submission of a draft piece of work for each module and frequently wait until the final hour, leaving insufficient time for reflection and assessment or familiarising themselves with the process. It was apparent from some of the responses that some students do not see the value of self-assessment and detailed feedback or have low self-esteem and low motivation.

With this in mind, we have coached the students in how to gain the optimum benefit from the process, with tutors offering comments on the way in which the form was completed and suggestions for improvement. This also afforded tutors the opportunity to praise students who had demonstrated high level self-assessment skills and made best use of the process.

Resources have been developed to help students understand the process and the benefits of self-assessment in formative feedback, including exemplars and a webcast presentation in the virtual learning environment. It is emphasised to students that the submission of a draft with the accompanying form is only a part of the feedback process. Students are asked to identify and query any feedback that is unclear to them and actively encouraged to follow up the return of a completed draft work form by arranging a tutorial (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Beaumont et al., 2011).

The benefits of quality formative feedback

Formative feedback is an important mechanism by which the student monitors progress and adjusts learning plans to improve performance and achieve their goals (Wingate, 2010). In addition, it can assist students to develop the skills that promote the ability to self-assess. It has been established as an integral part of the learning process irrespective of the mode of delivery (McDonald & Boud, 2003). Nevertheless it has also been recognised that there may be discrepancies between the message the tutor intends to convey and the perception of the student (Wingate, 2010). Numerous researchers have reported that students may not understand the feedback or perceive it differently (Walker, 2009). Weaver (2006) found that students find feedback most helpful when it is aligned with the assessment criteria, positive, specific and offers guidance. In addition this process should be a cumulative one in which each level requires more detailed assessment and encourages the individual to become a more autonomous independent learner.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006, p.208) maintain that "Good quality external feedback is information that helps students troubleshoot their own performance and self-correct: that is, it helps students take action to reduce the discrepancy between their intentions and the resulting

effects". Staff identified that one of the advantages of using this process was that the resulting feedback was specific and of high quality.

The use of the draft work assessment form ensures the student is directed to the criteria against which their work will be assessed and they try to identify successes and shortcomings. The literature consistently reports that students want feedback which is specific to them and specific not only to that assignment but also to discrete parts within that assignment (Beaumont, O'Doherty & Shannon, 2011; Shute, 2008). The effectiveness of feedback is related to the confidence and self-esteem of the learner and, from experience, we know that this is often low in our students. In a small study, Wingate (2010) identified that low achieving students were the least likely to engage with their feedback. Use of the self-assessment form means tutors are responding to the student's self- assessment of their work and answering the questions that they pose. The tutor will also be proactive in identifying areas in which the student could improve their work. However, by interacting with the student's own assessment the hope is that this is a dialogue rather than an instruction.

How we respond to the questions asked by the student is also significant. Carless et al. (2010) identify that students often want a direct answer whereas tutors aim to facilitate the development of a skill by the student themselves. A common example within early assignments is a query about referencing. This will be answered by directing students to an appropriate resource e.g. the university referencing guide, as well as modelling an example for them. This approach will help them to build transferable skills.

Although the draft work assessment form was developed primarily as a device for students, we found it addressed some of the quality and consistency concerns relating to feedback within the team. The form standardised our responses and made our approach to feedback, as a team, more uniform.

Developing Dialogue

We were used to the distance-learning students posting queries and comments on their forms, some of which were related to the specific draft assignment and others which were more generally about the course or their current study situation. It was perhaps more surprising that the campus-based students also did this, despite having weekly interactions with their tutors. Comments along the lines of 'I'm finding everything a struggle' would sometimes be added by students that tutors had not identified as being at risk within the classroom. Our perception was that the process of self-reflection allowed students to identify these feelings. The form provided them with a non-threatening vehicle through which they could communicate these feelings rather than verbalising them.

Tutors' perceptions are that the use of the form empowers the student; they can direct tutors to look at areas of concern and suggest strategies for improvement. They can ask the tutor a question and expect to be directed to the relevant information. They can open up in a non-threatening environment and expect a quick response. The process allows a level of individual interaction which is difficult for students and tutors to achieve with individuals who have competing professional and personal commitments.

Time consuming process

Tutors found unanimously that the most challenging aspect of the process was the time needed to complete the form and respond to the student's questions. The average time taken per piece of work ranged from forty minutes to an hour. Nevertheless there was a consensus on the fact that the benefits for the student should offset the increased time taken by the tutor.

All tutors approached the form in a similar way. They would read the work and respond to the student's comments and queries, then reread it to identify issues the student had omitted to comment on. Providing comments which are evidenced by specific examples from the work involved additional time which was perceived as doubling the effort involved.

Whilst there is no clear agreement about the amount of time spent on online teaching compared to classroom delivery, a number of authors agree that the communication time given to individual students is greater in online deliveries (Cavanaugh, 2005; McKenney et al., 2010). The self-assessment process provides a vehicle for tutors to apply the individual communication benefits from distance learning deliveries to classroom based deliveries. This experience would impact on the feasibility of using this process effectively with large numbers of students.

Evaluation of the draft work process

After the marking period we were keen to establish if there was any evidence to confirm our perception that students' marks improve with the draft work process. We reviewed all draft work assessment forms from a single trimester to identify those students whose draft work would have failed had it been submitted for summative assessment. Table 2 shows that of the students who would have failed at the draft work stage, only 3 out of 25 campus-based students and 1 out of 7 distance-learning students failed the summative assessment.

Table 2: Numbers of students who submitted draft work

	Number of tutors who reviewed draft work	Number of students who submitted draft work for formative feedback	Number of students who submitted the summative assessment	Number of students whose draft work would have resulted in a 'fail'	Number of students who submitted a draft and who failed the summative assessment
Campus based students	3	55	77	25	3
Distance Learning Students	1	13	14	7	1

It can be seen from the table that there was a high uptake for draft work across the courses (71% for campus based students and 93% for distance learning students). For all courses the draft work process led to a substantial reduction in the number of students failing the summative assessment.

However, 22 campus based students chose not to engage in the draft work process, of which 14 passed the summative assessment and 8 failed. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from this set of data, other than to surmise that students had opportunity in the classroom to clarify any uncertainties about the assignment, thereby gaining sufficient confidence to work without the need for formative feedback. It is nonetheless disappointing that the 8 students who failed did not take advantage of the draft work process; perhaps endorsing Simpson's (2008) suggestion that student self-referral is ineffective because weaker students who need the services tend to refer themselves the least.

Future plans

Developing the process

This small-scale review presented the opportunity to evaluate the process and identify specific improvements. The draft work assessment form itself addresses both specific and generic learning outcomes. In addition it promotes consistency and fairness in responding to the students' self-assessment. Our experience led us to incorporate minor edits to the wording in the final box. This addresses the issue of students writing about their work experience or personal attributes rather than commenting specifically on the draft work submitted. It is now presented as follows:

Table 3:

	Current	**New form of words**
Student Comments	Main strengths: Opportunities for development: Comments:	Main strengths of my assignment so far: Opportunities for development of this draft: Is there anything you would like to add?

The final question invites the student to comment on, or ask questions about any aspect of their studies, providing the tutor with an opportunity to identify appropriate support.

Another area which needs consideration is that tutors found managing this process with students for whom English is a foreign language more challenging. Inserting comments on the original script with track changes was felt to be less time-consuming than responding to limited self-assessment comments and following up with face-to-face tutorials. It does appear that some of the international students find the concept of self-assessment very difficult. This is an area which needs investigation and will be addressed in the future.

Some of our module assessments, including essays and business reports, lend themselves to a more specific series of prompts related to the content of the draft. These prompts, which take the form of short questions, are aligned with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each module. In addition to improving the quality of self-assessment they are designed to direct the tutor to the key elements more speedily, thus enabling the tutor to offer a quicker response, making more efficient use of time. Although the basic format remains the same, this will result in more specific forms for each module, building on the student's confidence and ability to self-assess.

Preparing the student to make best use of this process is an important feature of its success. The current format of introducing them to the process through webcasts and exemplars appears to work well. In addition, tutors recognise the importance of coaching students in the completion of the form in their first modules. As the process is embraced in the wider Faculty we intend to produce a guide for tutors to ensure that it is used consistently.

Student progression

In addition to offering specific and generic feedback to draft work, one of the purposes of the dialogue in this process is to support the student to build on their self-assessment skills. It is reasonable to expect students to feel more confident in the process as they progress through their course of study. This cumulative process can be challenging in a modular course. To help students and personal tutors to spot patterns of behaviour and academic issues that would

consistently appear in the student's work, we propose to create a repository for the self-assessments forms and module tutor's feedback. Looking at progress over a few modules would enable students and staff to identify commonalities and repetitions in feedback over time and develop appropriate strategies for improvement.

Transferability

The original target population for this initiative was the distance-learning students. However experience has demonstrated that campus-based students have benefitted greatly from this process. The authors suggest that this process is transferable to all student groups.

However, we have identified the time-consuming nature of this process and this leads to concerns about the feasibility of extending it to all modules, at all levels, in the Faculty. In this small scale study we have highlighted the benefits for students, not least of which is the higher incidence of passing a module by utilising the draft work process. For this reason, and also to provide consistently high quality feedback, it would seem advantageous to increase the use of the draft work assessment form. However, the small numbers of students on the pilot module can only give some indication of the challenges in time-management that tutors of the large core modules might face.

The current incentive to use the form relies on the belief of staff that using self-assessment motivates the student, helps them to achieve in their assessment and therefore retains more students. However, increased pressure of time and greater number of students mean that it is unrealistic to expect staff to be able to maintain the process without considering the increased time taken and recompensing them in some way.

Conclusion

In this paper we have reported our experience of introducing a structured format for students requesting feedback on draft work. The aims of the initiative were to encourage the students' development of self-assessment skills and to develop the dialogue between student and tutor.

Our experience has confirmed that this process results in high quality, specific and consistent feedback. As students became more familiar with the process they engaged more readily in dialogue with the tutor. The development of trust in the process and in the tutor resulted in increased self-esteem as the students gained confidence in their critical-thinking skills.

This evaluation also highlighted the importance of a robust procedure for introducing the student to the process and coaching them in the use of the form. This was achieved by commenting on how well they were engaging in the process and offering guidance for improvement.

A number of minor edits have been applied to the form to improve the clarity. In addition, we recognised that it would be beneficial to have an overview of feedback to identify areas where students are not demonstrating improvements. To this end we are planning to create a repository of feedback accessible to students and personal tutors.

One of the most challenging aspects of implementing this initiative has been the time required to provide feedback in this format. There is no doubt there are distinct benefits for the student and in our view these outweigh the issue of tutor time. Nevertheless this is an aspect which will need to be addressed before it can be used effectively in larger cohorts.

One of the unexpected benefits was that students felt able to express their anxieties about not only their studies but also personal difficulties and work challenges. The form has been

developed to incorporate this aspect as it is seen as incredibly valuable in identifying issues and facilitating appropriate support.

Further research is required to evaluate the student experience of using this process.

References

1. Andrade, H. and Valtcheva, A. (2009). Promoting Learning and Achievement through Self-Assessment. In *Theory into Practice, 48(1),* (pp. 12–19). Available through: EBSCOhost [Accessed 20 August 2014].

2. Beaumont, C.; O'Doherty, M. and Shannon, L., (2011). Reconceptualising assessment feedback: a key to improving student learning. In *Studies in Higher Education, 36(6),* (pp. 671-687). Available through: Anglia Ruskin Library Website, http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk [accessed 28 June 2014].

3. Boud, D. (2000). Sustainable Assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society. In *Studies in Continuing Education, 22(2),* (pp. 151-167). Available through: EBSCOhost Professional Development Collection [Accessed 28 June 2014].

4. Carless, D.; Salter, D.; Yang, M. and Lam, J., (2010). Developing sustainable feedback practices. In *Studies in Higher Education, 36(4),* (pp. 395-407). Available through: EBSCOhost [Accessed 29 June 2014].

5. Cavanaugh, J. (2005). Teaching online – A time comparison. In *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 8(1).* Available at http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring_81/cavanaugh81.htm

6. Cooper, N.J. (2000). Facilitating learning from formative feedback in level 3 assessment. In *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 25(3),* (pp. 279-291). Available through: EBSCOhost [18 November 2014].

7. Gibbs, G. and Simpson, C. (2004-5). Conditions under which Assessment Supports Students' Learning. In *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, 1,* (pp. 3-31). Available at: https://www.open.ac.uk/fast/pdfs/Gibbs%20and%20Simpson%202004-05.pdf [Accessed 15 November 2014].

8. Gosling, D. and Moon, J. (2002). *How to use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria.* Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer SEEC 3rd.

9. Higgins, R.; Hartley, P. and Skelton, A. (2002). The Conscientious Consumer: reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. In *Studies in Higher Education, 27(1),* (pp. 53-64). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 28 June 2014].

10. McDonald, B. and Boud, D. (2003). The Impact of Self-assessment on Achievement: the effects of self-assessment training on performance in external examinations. In *Assessment in Education, 10(2),* (pp. 209-220).

11. McGarrell, H. and Verbeem, J. (2007). Motivating revision of drafts through formative feedback. In *ELT Journal, 61(3),* (pp. 228-236). Available through: Oxford University Press Journals [accessed 28 June 2014].

12. McKenney, C.; Peffley, E. and Teolis, I., (2010). Comparison of time investment in common teaching practices among three instructional methods. In *Teaching Methods, 20(1),* (pp. 245-249). Available through: Highwire Press Free [accessed 28 August 2014].

13. Nicol, D.J. and MacFarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. In *Studies in Higher Education, 31(2),* (pp. 199–218). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 28 June 2014].

14. Panagiotis, A. and Chrysoula, I. (2010). Communication between tutors – students in DL: A case study of the Hellenic Open University. In *EURODL, 13(2)*. Available at http://www.eurodl.org/?p=archives&year=2010&halfyear=2&article=407.

15. Salmon, G. (2006). *e-Moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online.* 2nd ed. Oxon: Taylor and Francis Books Ltd.

16. Shute, V.A. (2008). Focus on Formative Feedback. In *Review of Educational Research, 78(1),* (pp. 153-189). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 28 June 2014].

17. Simpson, O. (2008). Motivating learners in open and distance learning: do we need a new theory of learner support? In *Open Learning, 23(3),* (pp.159-170). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 20 November 2014].

18. Tallent-Runnels, M.K.; Thomas, J.A.; Lan, W.Y.; Cooper, S.; Ahern, T.C.; Shaw, S.M.; X, Liu (2006). Teaching courses online: a Review of the research. In *Review of Educational Research, 76(1),* (pp. 93–135). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 28 June 2014].

19. Walker, M. (2009). An investigation into written comments on assignments: do students find them usable? In *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34(1),* (pp. 67–78). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 1 July 2014].

20. Watts, J.H. and Waraker S.M. (2008). When is a student not a student? Issues of identity and conflict on a distance learning work-based nurse education programme. In *Learning in Health and Social Care, 7(2),* (pp. 105–113). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 29 June 2014].

21. Weaver, M.R. (2006). Do students value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. In *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 31(3),* (pp. 379–394). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 29 June 2014].

22. Wingate, U. (2010). The impact of formative feedback on the development of academic Writing. In *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35(5),* (pp. 519–533). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 20 August 2014].

23. Zembylas, M.; Theodorou, M. and Pavlakis, A. (2008). The role of emotions in the experience of online learning: challenges and opportunities. In *Educational Media International, 45(2),* (pp. 107–117). Available through: EBSCOhost [accessed 20 August 2014].

Acknowledgements